The Field and the Game

Why the Collection Is Structural Without Being Deterministic — How Structure Sets the Field of Play but Human Beings, Reading Their Positions, Decide the Game Upon It; Why the Same Fireside Chat Moved a Congress One Year and Failed the Next, Because the Outcome Was Never Read Off the Structure but Chosen, Move by Move, From a Hundred Different Positions; How a Single Idea — That There Are Only So Many Smart Moves in a Given Structural Situation — Generates at Once the Patterns That Recur Across Civilizations That Never Touched and the Contingency by Which No Outcome Is Ever Sealed; Why Some Players Are Better Than Others and the Occupant of a Chair Is Therefore Never Furniture; and Why This View, Far From Refuting Marx, Recovers the Marx His Determinist Heirs Buried — A Statement of the Project's Method, and the Ground Beneath Position Logic

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with Claude (Anthropic)

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Preface

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This essay is the project's statement of its own method, and it answers a charge the rest of the collection invites. The charge is determinism. If structure is everywhere — the machine that runs itself, position logic, the two dials, the self-policing order — does it not follow that history runs on rails and the people in it are puppets? The essay's answer is no, and its reason is a single distinction. Structure is the board, the pieces, the rules; it sets the field of play and binds every move absolutely. But the board does not play the game. People do — and the outcome of a game is constrained by the board without being determined by it.

The hinge case is the fireside chat, which moved a wavering Congress one year and failed the next. A determinism cannot explain why the same instrument, the same president, yields different results; position logic can, because the outcome was never read off the structure but decided, move by move, from a hundred different positions — a congressman backing the policy when his position favoured it and opposing it when his position changed. Position logic is therefore a *tendency*, not a law: people in like positions tend to find like moves, because each, reasoning from where he sits, tends to find the same answer — but a man may misread his position, or value something else, or simply play it better or worse, and then he deviates, and the deviation is the theory working, not failing.

At the centre lies one proposition that does all the work: *there are only so many smart moves in a given structural situation.* The menu of good responses to a real problem is short, because the problem itself makes it short. And that single fact generates both halves of the method at once. It generates the patterns — because independent people facing the same situation converge on the same few moves without contact, which is why the same arrangements appear in civilizations that never touched, convergence and not destiny, as separate lineages evolved the eye and the wing again and again. And it generates the freedom and the skill — because *few* is not *one*, and within the short list there is still choosing, and some players are better than others. The essay closes by being fair to Marx, whose sharpest history said nearly what position logic says — that men make their own history, but not under circumstances of their own choosing — so that the quarrel is not with Marx but with the determinist reading of him. The field is given; the game is ours. *Tested, never revealed.*

A Note on This Collaboration

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This essay, like the rest of the collection, is a collaboration between a human author and an artificial intelligence, and it states the method both have been using all along. Its governing idea is Thomas J. Bryan's, and it is the load-bearing intuition beneath the whole project: that history is structural without being determined, that structure sets the field of play while human beings, running on what he has long called position logic, decide the game upon it — the chessboard whose pieces and rules bind every move while the players, not the board, settle the outcome. His is the further insight that does the decisive work: that the smart moves in any situation are few, so that patterns recur across unconnected peoples not by law or contact but by convergence, while the fewness still leaves room for choice and skill. As he puts it, the view puts the human back into human civilization.

The framing, the marshalling of scholarship, the verification, and the writing are Claude's (Anthropic), developed in dialogue with the author and to the project's standing rules. The essay holds its even-handed discipline at the point where it would be easiest to abandon it: it grants the determinist his real insight — the patterns are genuinely there, and structure is genuinely powerful — and it is scrupulously fair to Marx, distinguishing the deterministic tradition built in his name from what Marx himself wrote, and crediting Marx and Engels with very nearly the position the essay defends. The Marx and Engels passages are quoted briefly and verified; everything else is argued in the project's own terms, so that the essay stands alone as the ground beneath the collection's method.

The Argument in Six Parts

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The essay, in six parts, runs as follows.

Part I — The Question the Whole Collection Rests On. The charge the project must answer: that a study which finds structure everywhere seems to say history runs on rails and people are puppets; and the hinge case that refutes it — the fireside chat that worked one year and failed the next, proving the outcome was never dictated by the structure but decided, move by move, by human beings each reading a different position.

Part II — A Tendency, Not a Law. What position logic actually claims, and the one word that separates it from determinism: people in like positions *tend* to make like moves, not by compulsion but because each, reasoning from where he sits, finds a similar answer — so the deviations a determinism must explain away are the thing itself, the realistic human reading an imperfect position and sometimes reading it differently, or better, or worse.

Part III — The Chessboard. The analogy that holds the method: structure is the board, the pieces, the rules, which set the field and bind every move but do not play; the game is played by people, so the outcome is constrained but never determined; some players are better than others, so the occupant of a chair is never furniture; and patterns develop anyway, because the board rewards the same few strong moves to players who never met.

Part IV — Only So Many Smart Moves. The single idea that does all the work: in a given structural situation the smart moves are few, because the problem makes them few; and this one fact generates both the patterns (independent people converge on the same few moves without contact — why the same arrangements appear in civilizations that never touched, convergence not destiny) and the contingency (within the few moves there is still choosing, still skill, still the freedom to misplay).

Part V — Being Fair to Marx. The even-handed turn and the irony in it: the determinism the essay resists is a real strand of the Marxist tradition, the iron stages and the class assigned its role by law; but Marx himself, in his sharpest history, said almost exactly what position logic says, and Engels disowned the economic determinism his followers built — so the quarrel is not with Marx but with the determinist reading of him, which position logic recovers him from.

Part VI — Putting the Human Back. What the method buys and costs: the deterministic picture offers a comfort (no one is responsible) and a cruelty (everyone's skill is erased), and position logic refuses both, keeping the structure and its patterns entire while restoring the human beings who read their positions and choose with unequal skill; which is why the collection can hold what the determinist cannot — that arrangements recur with the regularity of a law, and that individuals still make the difference, both at once.

Part I

The Question the Whole Collection Rests On

The objection this essay exists to answer — that a project which finds structure everywhere, the machine that runs itself and the dials and the self-policing order, seems to say that history runs on rails and the people in it are puppets; and the hinge case that refutes the charge, the fireside chat that worked one year and failed the next, proving that the outcome was never dictated by the structure but decided, move by move, by human beings each reading a different position

I. The Charge of Determinism

A reader who has come this far through the collection might fairly level a charge, and the charge deserves a direct answer, because the whole method of the project stands or falls on it. The charge is determinism. Volume after volume, the collection has found structure beneath the surface of events: the machine that runs itself, turning whoever sits in its chairs; position logic, by which people in like situations act alike; the two dials of benefit and cost that shape what a person will do without anyone having to compel them; the self-policing order that reproduces itself while no one in particular intends it. A reader could be forgiven for concluding that the project believes history runs on rails — that structure is destiny, that the individual is a cork on a current, that what happens was always going to happen and the human beings who appear to decide things are only flattering themselves. If that were the project's view, it would belong to an old and powerful tradition, the tradition that reads history as the working-out of forces beneath the people, in which the named actors are interchangeable masks over a process that would have produced the same result through other masks. This essay exists to say, as plainly as the project can say anything, that this is not its view, and to state precisely what its view is instead — for the difference between the two is not a quibble. It is the difference between a study of laws and a study of patterns, and the project has always, and deliberately, been the second.

II. The Chat That Did Not Always Work

The refutation of the deterministic reading is already in the collection, in the case of the fireside chat, and it is worth drawing out because it does the whole work in miniature. If the political order were a deterministic machine driven by a unified class executing its interests with one will, then a given instrument applied to it would yield a given result, reliably, the way a lever yields a predictable motion. The fireside chat was such an instrument, in the hands of the man who is the collection's standing example of political mastery — and it did not always work. The same president, with the same radio, the same voice, the same technique, moved a wavering Congress to his side on one occasion and was met with indifference on another; his broadcast in 1937 to enlarge the Supreme Court raised no wave at all, and the effort failed. A determinism worth the name cannot account for this. If the structure dictated the outcome, the outcome would not vary while the structure held. But it did vary — wildly — and the reason it varied is the reason this whole essay exists. The outcome was never being read off the structure. It was being decided, each time, by a great many individual people, each one making a move from his own particular position: a congressman who backed the policy this year because his position favoured it — he feared the next election, or his district had received the dam, or the aroused public in his own state now made support the safe course — and who opposed the same president the next year because his position had changed, the pressure relenting or the interest shifting or the calculation turning over. The structure did not cast the vote. It set the situation in which each person cast his own, and the sum of those choices was the outcome, and the sum came out differently on different days because the positions did. That gap — between the structure that sets the situation and the outcome that human choices produce — is where this essay lives. It is the human gap, and the determinist's error is to imagine it closed.

Part II

A Tendency, Not a Law

What position logic actually claims, and the one word that separates it from determinism — that people in like positions tend to make like moves, not because a force compels them but because each, reasoning from where he sits, finds a similar answer; so that the deviations a determinism must explain away are, for position logic, the thing itself, working exactly as it should: the realistic human being reading an imperfect position and sometimes reading it differently, or valuing something else, or simply playing it better or worse

I. The Weight of the Word "Tend"

Position logic, which the collection has used since its first pages, must now be stated with the precision the charge of determinism demands, because everything turns on a single word inside it. The claim is this: people in like structural positions *tend* to read like incentives and make like moves — not because some force reaches down and compels them, but because each of them, reasoning from where he happens to sit, tends to arrive at a similar answer to the question his position poses. The load-bearing word is *tend*, and it is the whole difference between this project and a determinism. A law says: given these conditions, this result, always and without exception; that is what makes it a law. A tendency says something weaker and truer: given these conditions, this is the likely move for most people most of the time, because it is the smart move from that position — and a particular person may misread his position, or may weigh something his neighbours do not, or may be more skilled and find a better move, or may simply face a position that, examined closely, points the other way; and then he deviates, and the deviation is not a scandal to be explained away but an ordinary event the theory expects. Determinism has no room for the deviation; it must treat every exception as noise, or as the hidden hand of the structure working through a longer chain. Position logic has room for it built in, because position logic was never a claim about what people must do. It was a claim about what people, reasoning from a position, will tend to find worth doing — and tendencies have exceptions the way laws do not.

II. The Realistic Human Inside the Position

This is why the failed fireside chats are not embarrassments to the collection's theory but confirmations of it. The deterministic picture predicts uniformity: the structure commands, so the instrument that serves the structure's logic must work each time it is applied. Position logic predicts a distribution: the chat raises public pressure, which alters the positions of some congressmen — those for whom support has now become the safe course — but not others, whose positions, after the broadcast as before it, still point away; so some move and some do not, and the aggregate result depends on how many positions the chat actually shifted, which depends in turn on the state of a hundred particular situations the broadcast could not control. The determinist looks at the order and sees one structure and predicts one behaviour. Position logic looks at the same order and sees a hundred positions and predicts a spread. And the human being inside each position is not the frictionless calculator of the economist's fantasy, computing the optimum from perfect information; he is the realistic decision-maker the social sciences came, late, to acknowledge — reading an imperfect and shifting situation with limited information and limited attention, satisfied to find a move that is good enough rather than provably best, capable of error, capable of nerve, capable of seeing in his position something his neighbour in the same position missed. The structure narrows what such a person will sensibly do; it does not reach inside him and move his hand. That space between the narrowing and the moving — wide enough to hold misjudgement, skill, and surprise, narrow enough that the moves still fall into patterns — is exactly the space position logic describes, and it is a space a determinism cannot admit without ceasing to be one.

Part III

The Chessboard

The analogy that holds the whole method — that structure is the board and the pieces and the rules, which set the field of play and bind every move, but do not themselves play; that the game is played by people, so its outcome is constrained but never determined; that some players are better than others, which is why the occupant of a position is never interchangeable furniture; and that patterns nonetheless develop with the regularity of a law, because the board rewards the same few strong moves in the same situations, to players who never met

I. The Board Does Not Play

The analogy that carries the method is chess, and it carries it exactly. The board, the pieces, and the rules are the structure. They set the field of play; they define what is possible and what is forbidden; they bind every move that will ever be made, absolutely — a bishop may not move as a knight, and no force of will or genius will make it so, and in this the structure is as iron as any determinist could wish. And yet the board does not play the game. The players do. The outcome of a game of chess is not written in the board; it is decided, move upon move, by two people each reading the position in front of them and choosing. Everything this essay wants to say is held in that distinction, and three consequences fall out of it, and the three are the whole of the project's method. The first is that the outcome is constrained but not determined: the structure forbids most of what could be imagined, and within what it permits the game is genuinely open, genuinely undecided until it is played. The second is that skill matters — some players are better than others, and a master and a novice handed the identical position will carry it to opposite ends, which is precisely why the occupant of a chair is never interchangeable furniture, why a Nelson is not a replaceable mask over a process, why the same office moved a Congress under one president and could not under the next. The board was the same. The players were not.

II. Why the Patterns Are Real Anyway

The third consequence is the deep one, the one that reconciles the freedom with the regularity and so answers the charge of determinism without surrendering a single one of the collection's structural findings. It is that patterns nonetheless develop, reliably, lawfully almost, *because* the structure constrains the good moves. Chess openings repeat; certain configurations recur across millions of games; the same motifs and traps and endgame shapes appear again and again among players who never met and never coordinated and many of whom are separated by centuries — not because anything compelled them, but because the board rewards the same handful of strong responses to the same situations, and players seeking to win converge upon them independently. The patterns are perfectly real, and the freedom is perfectly real, and the great error is to think they are in tension. They are not in tension, because they live in different places: the pattern lives in the structure's constraint upon the *menu* of smart moves, and the freedom lives in the human *choosing* among them, and in the skill that chooses well or badly, and in the room the menu always leaves for a player to misjudge or to find something rare. This is the same insight the collection has met before in the theory of war, where it was said that the conduct of arms is neither a pure science whose results can be computed nor a free art answerable to nothing, but a domain in which trained judgement operates within hard constraints and against the friction of chance — genius and accident both, inside a frame that permits them without dictating them. The chessboard is that frame. Structure sets it. The human plays inside it. And the patterns we keep finding are the tracks the players wear into the board by converging, again and again, on the few moves the board rewards.

Part IV

Only So Many Smart Moves

The single idea that does all the work, stated fully — that in a given structural situation the smart moves are few, not because anyone limits them but because the problem itself does; and that this one fact generates both halves of the method at once: the patterns, because independent people facing the same situation converge on the same few moves without contact, which is why the same arrangements appear in civilizations that never touched; and the contingency, because within the few smart moves there is still choosing, still skill, still the freedom to misplay

I. The Menu Is Short

Beneath the chessboard and beneath position logic lies a single proposition, and it is worth isolating because it is the hinge on which the entire method turns. It is this: *in a given structural situation, there are only so many smart moves.* The space of good responses to a real problem is small — not because any authority has narrowed it, not because of a law of history, but because the problem itself narrows it. Most of the moves available in any situation are bad; they lose, they waste, they fail to answer what the situation is asking; and the moves that are genuinely good — that actually solve the problem the position poses — are few, often very few, sometimes nearly unique. A ruler who must feed a city, a commander who must hold a river line, a party that must win a majority, a dynasty that must survive a succession: each faces a situation that rewards a short list of moves and punishes the rest, and the shortness of that list is not imposed from outside but discovered, by anyone who looks hard at the problem, as a property of the problem. The menu is short because reality is unforgiving, and most ways of doing a hard thing do not work.

II. Both the Patterns and the Freedom, From One Fact

The reason this small proposition deserves to stand at the centre of the method is that it generates, by itself, both of the things the method must explain, and generates them together. It generates the patterns. For if the smart moves in a situation are few, then independent people who face that situation will tend to find the same few moves, converging upon them without ever having met, without communication, without inheritance — which is the answer to the oldest puzzle in the comparative study of human arrangements: why the same institutions, the same solutions, the same structures of rule appear in civilizations that had no contact with one another. The deterministic temptation is to explain this by a universal law of social development, a single track all societies climb. The position-logic answer is humbler and, the project holds, truer: there was no law and no track and no contact; there was only a recurring structural problem with a short list of good solutions, and separate peoples, each reasoning from the same position, found the same solutions independently, the way separate lineages of living things, facing the same problem of seeing or of flight, evolved the eye and the wing again and again with no ancestor in common — convergence, not diffusion, and not destiny. It is the same logic by which two strangers told to meet in a vast city on a day, with no way to agree where, will each go to the one obvious place and find the other there: not because they were compelled, but because the problem of finding each other has a salient solution that both, reasoning alone, arrive at. The structural problems of power have their salient solutions, and the patterns are the marks they leave.

And the very same fact — that the smart moves are few — generates the freedom and the skill, which is the half a determinism cannot hold. For "few" is not "one." Within the short list there is still choosing, and the choosing is where the human being lives: the difference between the player who finds the best move on the list and the one who finds a merely adequate one; the misreadings that take a player off the list entirely; the rare master who sees a move the list did not seem to contain. The shortness of the menu is why the patterns are reliable. The plurality within the menu, and the freedom to misplay it, is why the outcome is never sealed. One fact, and it yields the regularity and the contingency at a single stroke — which is why the project needs no law of history to explain the patterns, and no denial of the patterns to make room for the human. It needs only this: the smart moves are few, and people, reasoning from their positions, tend to find them, and do not all find them equally well.

Part V

Being Fair to Marx

The even-handed turn, and the irony at the heart of it — that the determinism this essay resists is a real strand of the Marxist tradition, the iron stages and the class assigned its role by historical law; but that Marx himself, in his sharpest historical writing, said almost exactly what position logic says, and Engels late in life disowned the economic determinism his followers had built; so that the quarrel is not with Marx the analyst but with the deterministic reading of him, and position logic, far from refuting Marx, recovers the Marx that reading buried

I. The Determinism That Is Really There

It would be easy, and it would be unfair, to set position logic against Marx as though agency were being rescued from a man who denied it, and the project's discipline requires the harder and more honest account. There is a real determinism in the Marxist tradition, and the essay does not pretend otherwise. In its orthodox and its popular forms — the historical materialism that became a science of prediction, the confident sequence of modes of production climbing toward an inevitable end, the proletariat assigned its historical role by a law as sure as gravity, the collapse of capitalism foretold like an eclipse — there is exactly the rails-beneath-history picture this essay rejects, and it has had enormous influence, and it is what most people mean when they call an analysis "Marxist." Against that picture the objection stands in full: if history runs on rails, every fireside chat must work, because the structure commands the result; and history does not run that way, and the chats did not all work. The determinist, it should be granted at once, is not a fool — he is responding to something real, the genuine and striking regularity of the patterns, the true and heavy power of structure over what people can do; his error is not in seeing the structure but in mistaking its constraint for compulsion, its tilt for a track, its tendency for a law.

II. The Marx the Determinists Buried

But here is the irony the project finds too good to leave unspoken, and too instructive. Marx himself, in his sharpest piece of historical analysis — his study of exactly the kind of contingent political scramble this essay cares about, the rise of a "grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part" out of the deadlock of contending classes — wrote something that is very nearly position logic in a single sentence. He wrote that *men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please*; that they make it under circumstances not of their own choosing, handed down from the past, with the weight of dead generations pressing on them. Read it beside the chessboard and the kinship is unmistakable: the players make the game — their own history, their own moves, genuinely theirs — but not upon a board they chose, the board being given, inherited, binding. That is not the voice of a man who thinks people are corks on a current. It is the voice of a man who thinks people choose, and choose hard, inside constraints they did not pick — which is the whole of what this essay has been saying. And Engels, late in his life, watched his followers harden the doctrine into the economic determinism the master had never quite taught, and tried to call them back: to make the economic the *only* determining element, he wrote, was to turn a true idea into a senseless phrase, for many forces play upon history and the economic is decisive only in the last analysis; and he sent his correspondents, pointedly, to that same study of the contingent French crisis as a model of *non-deterministic* analysis. The quarrel, then, is not with Marx the analyst of the actual event, who watched the positions of the classes open a space and a particular man step into it. The quarrel is with the deterministic *reading* of Marx — the reading that predicts the fireside chat must always work because the structure wills it — and against that reading position logic is not a refutation of Marx at all. It is a recovery of the Marx his heirs buried: the historian who knew that the structure deals the hand and the players still have to play it.

Part VI

Putting the Human Back

What the method buys and what it costs — that the deterministic picture offers a strange comfort and a strange cruelty, absolving everyone of responsibility and erasing everyone's skill at once; that position logic refuses both, keeping the structure and its patterns entire while restoring the human beings who read their positions and choose their moves with unequal skill and divided hearts; and that this is why the collection can hold what the determinist cannot — that the same arrangements recur across unconnected ages with the regularity of a law, and that individuals still make the difference, both at once

I. The Comfort and the Cruelty It Refuses

The deterministic picture offers two things, and both are worth naming because position logic declines them both. It offers a comfort: if history runs on rails, then no one is finally responsible, nothing could have gone otherwise, the catastrophe and the triumph were equally inevitable, and the weight of having to choose is lifted from the actors and from those who judge them. And it offers, underneath the comfort, a cruelty: it erases the people. It makes the master and the fool interchangeable, since the structure would have produced the same result through either; it makes the skill of a Nelson and the choice of a dissenter into illusions, flattering noise over a process that did not need them; it tells the human being inside the position that his reading of it, his nerve, his judgement, the thing he saw that others missed, changed nothing and was always going to change nothing. Position logic refuses the comfort and the cruelty together, and it refuses them without giving back one inch of the structural ground the collection has won. The structure is real; it is binding; it generates the patterns the project has spent its volumes tracing, and this essay retracts none of them. But within the structure there are human beings, reading their positions and choosing their moves, with unequal skill and divided motives and imperfect sight — and the outcome is therefore *made*, by them, on the day, and was not foretold. The patterns are structural. The outcomes are human. The project holds both, and the holding of both is the whole of its method.

II. The Field Is Given; the Game Is Ours

This is why the collection can carry, without contradiction, the two findings a determinism is forced to choose between — and the inability to hold both is the surest sign that one has mistaken a pattern for a law. It can say, on one page, that the same arrangements appear in civilizations that never touched, with a regularity that looks like destiny, because the structural problems of power have short lists of solutions and separate peoples converge on them unaided. And it can say, on the facing page, that individuals make the difference — that a Nelson is not a mask, that a master wrings from a chair what a lesser man leaves in it, that the fireside chat works or fails on the day according to how the hundred positions fall — because within the short list there is always the choosing, and the choosing is human, and humans reading the same board do not all find the same move, and the best of them find moves the board only ever made possible and never required. The discipline this leaves is the one the project has practised throughout without naming its ground, and it can be named now. Read the structure to know the field and the odds: what the positions will tend to reward, which moves are smart, where the patterns will most likely fall, what the machine will do if no one of unusual skill or nerve disturbs it. That reading is the science in the project, and it is real, and it is most of what foresight can honestly offer. But never mistake the odds for the result, because the game is still played by people, and people, handed the same position, deviate, and misjudge, and now and then play above themselves and bend the line of the likely — and the whole human content of history lives in that margin, between what the field rewards and what the player, this player, on this day, actually does. The field is given. The game is ours. That is why this has been, from the first volume, a study of *patterns* and not of *laws* — of the tracks that human beings, reading the same few situations, wear into the same few moves, written deeply by the field and never once dictated by it. Tested, never revealed.

A Note on Sources

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This is an essay on method, and it argues mostly in the project's own terms; its few external supports are standard and, where they are load-bearing, verified. Quotations are kept brief and are confined to the two passages whose exact sense matters.

The treatment of Marx rests on his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), the source of the formulation that men make their own history but not under circumstances of their own choosing, and of the description of a political crisis that let “a grotesque mediocrity play a hero's part”; and on Friedrich Engels's letter to Joseph Bloch of 21 September 1890, in which Engels disclaimed the reduction of history to the economic as a “senseless phrase” and recommended the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, in a companion letter to Conrad Schmidt, as a model of non-deterministic analysis. The distinction drawn in the text — between the deterministic tradition built in Marx's name and what Marx and Engels themselves wrote — follows the long scholarly debate over economic determinism in Marxism.

The wider argument draws on familiar ground without leaning on any single authority: the structure-and-agency problem in social theory, of which position logic is the project's own resolution and to which the closest academic kin are Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* (structured dispositions generating regulated improvisation) and Anthony Giddens's duality of structure; the realistic decision-maker of Herbert Simon's bounded rationality, who satisfices within constraints rather than optimising from perfect information; Thomas Schelling's focal points, by which strangers converge on a salient solution without communication; the biological convergence by which independent lineages evolve the same solutions — the eye, the wing — to the same constrained problems, the analogue in nature of “only so many smart moves”; and Carl von Clausewitz's account of war as neither pure science nor free art but trained judgement operating within hard constraints and against the friction of chance. The project's own terms — position logic, the machine that runs itself, the two dials, fit versus capability, tested-not-revealed — are developed across the collection's companion studies, in particular *The Machine That Runs Itself*, *When the World Comes Into Play*, and *The Frozen Answer*, and are described here so that the essay stands alone. *Part of the collection* Patterns of Power. *Tested, never revealed.*